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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISTANBUL 000404

SIPDIS

DRL FOR LCAREY

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [OSCE](#) [TU](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: JEWISH COMMUNITY CONCERNED, BUT NO INCIDENTS YET

REF: ISTANBUL 38

Classified By: Consul General Sharon A. Wiener for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. The beginning of television series "Separation" (Ayrilik) aired weekly on state-run TRT 1 starting October 13th inspired condemnation and concern from Israel and the Jewish community in Turkey. Community Vice Presidents Lina Filiba and Daniel Navarro met with the Consul General on October 21 to discuss their concerns about what they perceive as the negative implications of the series. Noting that "after Gaza ended, our life returned to normal until now," Navarro said the PM "has started everything again, with the anti-Israeli statements." Filiba said she fears that Erdogan's statements, combined with the TV series on a state-run channel depicting Israelis murdering Palestinian children, may prompt anti-Semitic incidents. Since then, TRT has broadcast an edited version of the series, cutting out most of the more contentious scenes. The Jewish Community leadership acknowledged that it is important to their cause that they avoid the perception of crying wolf and put their focus on combating anti-Semitic commentary and acts rather than anti-Israeli commentary. However, they are concerned that there be no ramifications of anti-Israeli commentary on the lives of Turkish Jews. So far, they said, no incidents have occurred. End summary.

12. (C) After the initial airing of the series in which Israeli aggressors are depicted as terrorizing Palestinian families, the Jewish Community's president, Sylvio Ovadya, requested to meet with Istanbul Mayor Topbas to discuss the municipality's perceived support of the series (by showing clips on screens in the metros). He also requested to speak with Minister for EU Affairs Egemen Bagis. Navarro and Filiba reported that neither party returned Ovadya's calls. This concerned them because, while their relationship with Topbas has never been positive, they normally have access to Bagis. The CG recommended they first reach out to their local Beyoglu municipal mayor Ahmet Misbah Demircan, to discuss their concerns since the metro station in question is in his jurisdiction. Filiba and Navarro both agreed this would be a useful step and offered to follow up with us on the results.

13. (SBU) On October 21, newspapers reported on a letter the Jewish Community sent to President Gul, PM Erdogan, and Foreign Minister Davutoglu requesting that the series be taken off the air. The Community said they did not receive a response to their letter. However, according to news reports and the Jewish Community, TRT did remove the more disturbing segments of the second part in the series aired in the evening of the 21st. The uncut version remains available online for comparison. The Community leadership commented

positively on this development.

¶4. (C) Filiba and Navarro were quick to point out that the PM has expressed that Turkish Jews are an essential part of Turkish society and he has always ordered police to be very diligent in their protection of the Jewish community and properties. "We see this and feel very well protected by the police." However, Filiba further emphasized that the distinction between Israeli actions and Jewish actions is one that can be quickly lost among the Turkish public. She said the community is very concerned that the government is not taking enough action to remind the public of this distinction.

¶5. (SBU) An EU Commission funded perception study on "the others," and specifically on Jews among Turkish citizens, revealed that of the 1,108 individuals surveyed across the country, 42 percent would not want a Jewish neighbor. Of the options provided the participants, this response falls below the 57 percent who do not want an atheist neighbor and above the 35 percent and 18 percent who would not want a Christian or foreign neighbor, respectively. As a part of the grant, the Jewish Community will be conducting a follow up survey next year.

¶6. (SBU) The survey also revealed that Turks hold stereotypical views of Jews, judging them to be less trustworthy, less valuing of other people, but more hardworking than Christians and Muslims. Prime Minister Erdogan reflected his own stereotyping in a recent speech to new students at Yildiz Technical University in which he

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commended the Jews as role models because they "have many important achievements in science and then can sit back in their chairs as the money rolls in." Commentary from columnists either condemned the remark as anti-Semitic or simply an attempted compliment gone awry that revealed the Prime Minister's ignorance. Jewish Community leadership told us they viewed his comments as a ham-handed attempt at a compliment.

¶7. (C) Comment: The Jewish community said it realizes that it cannot "have it both ways" and appear to argue that they are Turkish citizens while condemning Turkish actions against Israel as anti-Semitic. They acknowledge that it is important to their cause that they avoid the perception of crying wolf and put their focus on combating anti-Semitic commentary and acts rather than anti-Israeli commentary. Filiba and Navarro agreed with the CG that the protection of freedom of expression is paramount and will be of greater good to a democratic Turkey, and their community, in the long run than attempting to censor every inaccurate portrayal of Israel in Turkish media. We will continue to monitor the public response to the GOT and TRT's anti-Israeli depictions, as well as report on further developments in the Jewish Community's dialogue with the GOT. End Comment.
WIENER